

*Of the Reverence due to GOD in his
Publick Worship.*

A
SERMON
Preach'd before the
King & Queen,
A T
WHITE-HALL,
March 25, 1694. being the 5th. Sunday
in LENT.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
NICHOLAS Lord Bishop of *Chester.*

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ECCLES. V. i. former part.

*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the House
of G O D.*

IN the beginning of this Chapter *Solomon* prescribes several Rules to be observed by us in the Worship of God, as ever we expect to recommend our selves thereby to his Favour and Acceptance. The first of which is general, and extends to the whole publick Worship; the other are particular, relating to some special parts of it.

The general Rule is that which I have chosen to insist upon, *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.*

In treating of which, I shall, by God's Assistance, do these *Three* things.

I. I shall briefly shew the Meaning of the Words, and what is the Duty therein prescribed.

II. I shall enforce the Duty by proper Arguments.

III. I shall suggest some further Helps by way of Direction, in order to the better Performance of it.

I. I shall briefly explain the Words, and shew what is the Duty therein prescribed. *Keep, or take heed to thy feet*, so I read them; the *Hebrew* Letters being plural, though the Pointing, which I take to be but a late Invention of the *Masorites*, is singular.

Take heed to thy Feet when thou *goest*, or rather when thou *comest*: for so the Original Word signifies, and is so translated in several other places; and that it ought to be so render'd here, appears, because all the Duties afterward mentioned, to which this word in com-

mon

mon belongs, are such as are to be perform'd, not when we are *going*, but when we are *come* to the House of God. So that I ~~read~~ the Words thus. *Take heed to thy feet when thou comest to the house of God.*

The Jews were wont to expresse their Reverence toward God, when they came to his House to worship him, by putting off their Shooes at their Entrance into it. Whether this Custom was derived from the Patriarchs before *Moses*; or from that Command God Exod. 3. 5. gave to *Moses* and *Joshua*, Josh. 5. 15. To loose their *shooes from off their feet, because the place whereon they stood was holy ground*, need not now be disputed. It is sufficient, that this Rite of Veneration was used by them, when they approach'd to God in his Publick Worship. Now that *Solomon* here alludes to this Practice, no Man, I think, will question, who considers, That all other Accounts given of this Expresssion, seem very foreign and impertinent to the Matter he here treats of.

The Duty therefore here injoin'd is, That we behave our selves decently and reverently when we come to worship God in his House. So that when *Solomon* says, *Take heed to thy feet*, he does in effect say; Do not come rudely into the House of God, nor behave thy self carelessly when thou art there;

there ; but address thy self to God with that Reverence and *godly Fear*, which becomes so glorious and dreadful a Majesty.

Before I proceed, that my Design may be clearly understood, I shall premise *Two* things.

1. That which I intend to speak to at present, is *not* that Reverence which is due to the House, by which it ought to be distinguished from all other Houses, upon the account of its peculiar Relation to God : but that which we are to give to God, when we present our selves there to worship him ; in like manner as all those particular Duties afterward mentioned, relating to the several Parts of Worship there to be performed, are such as immediately respect God himself.

2. Though bodily Reverence is the only thing expressed in the Text, yet the Reverence of the Soul, of which that of the Body is but a Sign, is suppos'd and impli'd ; since all outward Expressions of Devotion, how solemn and pompous soever, which do not arise from within, are no better than Hypocrisie, and by consequence are abhorr'd by God, *who sees in secret*.

So that the Reverence here requir'd, is both that of the inward, and that of the outward Man. That of the inward Man consists in such Thoughts and Affections, as are in some sort becoming the
God

God we worship; in awful Apprehensions of his glorious Majesty, of his unspotted Purity, of his unfearchable Wisdom, of his Almighty Power, of his Presence with us, and observant Eye over us: and in such an humble sense of our own Unworthiness to be admitted into his Presence, as becomes us not only as we are his Creatures, but much more as we are Sinners. That of the outward Man consists in such a Deportment of the Body, as is a fit Expression of the inward Reverence of the Soul; As in standing, bowing, kneeling, lifting up the Eyes and Hands toward Heaven; in diligent Attendance to his Word read and preach'd, and in other such visible signs, as openly declare, That we esteem him worthy to receive *all Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power.* Both these are our bounden Duty; especially the former; though the latter is that which my Text hath more immediate respect to. The Decency, says *St. Chrysostome*, required of us in publick Worship, is, first to approach unto God with a broken and contrite Heart; then to shew the inward Disposition of the Heart, by the outward Deportment of the Body; as by standing, by the decent composure of the Hands, by a meek and contracted Voice.

*Chrys. de verb.
Esaie, vid. Dom.
Hom. 1.*

Now

Now, that in our Approaches to God, we may thus reverence him both in Body and in Spirit, I proceed,

II. To enforce the Duty by such Arguments, as will make it plainly appear, That all the Reverence we can possibly give to him, is no more than what upon all accounts we stand indispensably obliged to.

To which purpose let us consider,

i. The transcendent Excellencies of his Nature; That all Perfections of Being, not only meet in him; but are all in him without measure. That he is immensely great in Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Justice, Truth; and that in proportion to the Excellencies of his Nature is the Glory he inhabits; He dwelling in that Light to which no Man can approach. Such is the God we worship, in Glory inaccessible, in Wisdom unsearchable, in Power uncontrollable, in Truth immovable, in all other Perfections infinitely exalted above all Blessing and Praise.

And what are we? What but Earth and Ashes, Chrys. in Act. c. 14. Rom. 30. Smoak and Vapour, as St. Chrysostome expresses it? What is our Strength? What is our Wisdom? What is our Power? How weak? How silly? How scanty? So near to nothing are we,

we, that we *seem* to be, rather than *are*, Psal. 39. 5, 6.
for *Man walketh in a vain shew* (as the
Psalmist speaks); at our very best estate we are all
Vanity. It is the Observation of the Father now
mentioned, That when *St. Paul* would shew the
distance between God and Man, he doth not re-
present it to be so great, but we may conceive it
to be much greater. For what says he?

*Shall the thing formed, say to him that form-
ed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath* Chrys. de In-
comprehens. Dei
Nat. Hom. 2.
*not the Potter power over the Clay, to make of the
same lump one vessel to honour, and another to disho-
nour? The distance, says he, between God and
Man, is as great as that between the Potter and the
Clay; Yea much greater; for if a Man seem more
Noble and more Beautiful than the Clay, it is
not the diversity of Nature, but the Skill of the
Artificer that hath made the difference: but so
great is the distance between God and Man, that
neither can the Tongue express, nor the Mind con-
ceive it.*

Let us consider,

2. What God is to us; and in what Relation
we stand to him.

It is he that raised us at first, out of Nothing
into Being; that spake the word and we were
made. And shall we not with the humblest

B

Reverence,

Reverence, fall down before the Lord our Maker?

It is he, by whom we live and move, as well as have our Being; in whose hands our Breath is, and whose are all our Ways. And shall we not devoutly adore him, upon whom we continually so entirely depend, that we can neither breathe nor live, any longer than he sustains us?

It is he, that daily poureth his Benefits upon us. All those Enjoyments that render our Being, more desirable than not to be, we owe solely to him as our constant *Benefactor*. And shall we not revere his Goodness, to whom we owe all the good things we enjoy? Shall we by our unseemly Carriage toward him, provoke him to become our Enemy, who hath been so great a Friend to us?

It is he upon whom we depend for all future Blessings; from whose Bounty alone we can hope for the continuance of our Comforts in this World, and for an Immortal Bliss in the next. And shall we not pay all possible Respect to him, by whom we hope to be made everlastingly happy?

It is he that hath redeemed us from the hands of our Enemies, not with such poor corruptible things as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of his own beloved Son. Since therefore

fore we are not our own, ought we not to glorifie him, both with our Body and Spirit, which he hath purchas'd at so dear a rate?

In short, if the foregoing Considerations do not move us, let us once more consider, That this God who is our Maker and Preserver, our munificent Benefactor, and most merciful Redeemer, is also our supreme Judge, from whose Sentence there lies no Appeal. *We must*, there is no avoiding it, but whether we will or no, we must all appear before his dreadful Tribunal, to give an account of our Behaviour toward him. And can we hope for a favourable Sentence from him, if in our most solemn Worship of him, we carry our selves toward him, as if he were a Being so mean, as deserved not to be fear'd by us?

Consider,

3. That this great and incomprehensible Majesty, is in a peculiar manner present with us, when we assemble together in his House to worship him. Though he be substantially present every where, yet in some places he is present in greater State, (as I may say) than in other, and by consequence a more awful Deportment is there required of us. Heaven is the Place where he keeps his Court, where his chief Ministers of State constantly attend his Throne, where he most illustriously displays

plays the Majesty of his Glory, and from whence he dispatches his Ambassadors to negotiate his Affairs in this lower World: But now as Earthly Kings have usually their different Palaces, one in the Imperial City, surpassing all the rest in Splendour and Magnificence; others of inferior Note in more obscure Palaces, and at a great distance from the Seat Imperial, so this King of kings who dwells in Heaven in Glory unapproachable by mortal Eyes, hath also his Mansion-houses in which he dwells here on Earth, and hath his Officers of State there also attending on him, though not in such shining Robes as in Heaven. Such are the Places set apart for his Publick Worship; in these he is otherways present than in common Places, and therefore these are by way of distinction called in Scripture *His Houses*, and He is said to *dwell* in them. Thus he dwelt among his ancient People; first in the *Tabernacle*, as his moveable House, while they were in their Travels thro' the Wilderness; and in the *Temple* afterward as his fixed Habitation, when they came to be settled in the Land of *Canaan*; as this latter is expressly called by David his *Palace*, so he himself said of it, *Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.*

2 Chron. 29.
1, 19.

If it be now enquired, how or in what manner, God is more peculiarly present in Church-Assemblies, than in other places? Though I might shew you, that he is so, sundry ways and in divers manners, and more particularly by the communication of his Holy Spirit, to all those who come duly prepared to receive it; yet as more proper to the Argument I am now upon, I Answer briefly, by the Presence of his Heavenly Attendants, the Holy Angels; as a King is more eminently present where his Court is, than where he himself is alone in Person. Hence Jacob having seen a Vision of Angels, upon his awaking says, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*. What? did not Jacob know, ^{Gen. 28. 16,} that God was in every place, and by consequence in that where he then was? Yea doubtless. The meaning therefore is, God is in a more solemn manner in this place than in others, he is here, as in his Palace, with his prime Ministers attending on him; as appears by what follows, *How dreadful is this place? this is no other but the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven.*

Now that the Angels are present in the Assemblies for his Worship, we have sufficient evidence, both in the Old Testament and in the New. The Psalmist speaking of Mount Sion, the place set apart

apart for his publick Worship, says, *The Chariot of God is twice ten thousand, thousands of Angels, the Lord is among them, Sinai is in the Sanctuary* (so the words are to be render'd according to the Original.) By the Chariot of God is meant the Host of Angels, by which God's special Presence is convey'd from Heaven to Earth, and the plain meaning of the words is this, That a great Host of Angels does now attend upon God in Mount *Sion*, the place of his Public Worship, as they did formerly on Mount *Sinai*, at the giving of the Law there. This Angelical Presence was represented both in the Tabernacle and in the Temple; by the Figures of the Cherubin woven in the Curtains of the former, and carved in the Walls of the latter.

And if the Angels gave their attendance at the Jewish, can it be thought that they pay not as much respect to our Christian Worship? If that low and carnal Service had so great an honour vouchsafed to it, can it be imagined, that that which is more Spiritual, and more becoming the Divine Nature should have less? If any Man can entertain a thought so unreasonable, he may soon be convinced of his error, by calling to remembrance, That *St. Paul* took it for granted, that the Angels were present at Religious Christian Assemblies,

Assemblies, and thought this alone a sufficient Reason, why Women should there present themselves in a decent Dress. *For this cause* 1 Cor. 11. 10. (saith he) *ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the Angels.* By Power is here meant a Veil, the Token of her Husband's Power over her, (by a Trope not unusual in Holy Scripture) so that the Meaning is, Such regard ought to be had to the Angels, who attend our Publick Worship, and observe our Demeanour in it, that the Woman, out of Respect to them, ought to be decently habited, to have a Covering on her Head, in token of her Subjection to her Husband. Were this peculiar Presence of God with his Holy Angels duly consider'd, one would think it should cause all Women professing Godliness, to present themselves in the Church, in a more modest and humble Dress, than some of them do.

To compose us yet to greater Reverence, let us consider,

4. What the Meaning and Intention of Divine Worship is. Is it not (as far as we are able) to honour God according to his excellent Greatness; to acknowledge the infinite distance that is between Him and us; to make profession of our entire dependence upon him, and subjection to him?

him? This surely is the plain Import of every part of Religious Worship.

In praising God, We declare the peerless Excellencies of his Nature, and ascribe to him the Glory of his admirable Works. In putting up our Petitions to him, for the prevention or removal of all evil, and for the obtaining of all good things, we acknowledge his All-sufficiency, and our own Emptiness. And what do we else in Thanksgiving, but gratefully own our Obligations to his bounteous Goodness, for all the good things we either have or hope for?

Thus the Meaning of every Act of Divine Worship, is to give Glory to God, by entertaining such Thoughts of him, and Affections toward him, as are in some sort suitable to the Perfections of his Nature, and to those Relations we stand in to him; and by representing to others by outward Signs, the inward Devotion of our Souls toward him.

And though it be true, That the Body may bow, when there is no submission of the Soul to God; the Hands may be lifted up to Heaven, when the Heart is in the Ends of the Earth: yet when the Soul is possessed with the Fear of God, it will naturally discover it self by a suitable Composure and Deportment of the Body. And therefore when the outward Behaviour is such, as no way

way testifies our honourable Esteem of God, we cannot truly be said to worship him, because we do not then honour, but rather despise him. And such is the Carriage of too many Persons in many of our Religious Assemblies, so far from giving God the Glory of his incomprehensible Majesty, that they durst not behave themselves so disrespectfully in the Presence of their Earthly Prince; especially when they come to pay their Homage to him, to receive his Commands, or to beg some great Favour of him. For would any Man shew that Contempt of his Prince as not to attend to his Voice, but turn away from him, and talk with another Man, while his Prince is signifying his Will and Pleasure to him, and laying his Commands upon him? Would any Man laugh in his Prince's Face, at the same time, that he is begging the Pardon of his Rebellions, and supplicating to him for his Life?

But how lightly soever these Persons may behave themselves in the Church; if at any other time they can prevail with themselves to be serious, I beseech them to consider,

5. How highly they hereby incense the Displeasure of God against them. Contempt though from an Equal, can hardly be born with Patience; how much more provoking must it needs

be from an Inferiour, and more yet from a Dependent? Were another Man so entirely your Creature, that he could not stir a finger, or so much as draw one breath without you, would not any the least Disrespect from him, greatly provoke your Displeasure against him? With what Indignation then, think you, must the Sovereign Lord of All resent the insolent Contempts of such poor impotent things, as cannot subsist a moment longer than he pleases, and whom with the least breath of his Displeasure he can blow into Hell?

By the blast of God they perish, by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed, as Eli-phaz speaks.

God is not wont, I grant, to suffer his Anger to break out upon the first provocation; nay, he commonly bears long with the most presumptuous Offenders. Such is his Goodness, that he is not willing that any should perish, he therefore gives them time to repent, and in that time lays before them the most powerful Motives to bring them to it. But though he bears long, yet he will not for ever bear with them; his Patience will have an end, and when that is once expired, his Wrath will kindle against them. And who knows the power of his Wrath? Can you think you shall have Courage to bear up against, or Strength to resist

resist his Almighty Arm? Can the dry Stubble contend with devouring Fire? If not, it then concerns you to consider,

6. That our God is a consuming Fire. This very Argument the Apostle uses to awaken us to Fear and Reverence in his Worship. Let Heb. 12. 28 us have Grace, saith he, to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, Why? for our God is a consuming fire. The word *καίρουν*, in the Stile of the New Testament more especially, denotes, that serving of God which consists in his solemn Worship, and so plainly implies, That God is a consuming Fire, not only to those who do not worship him at all, but to those also who worship him without Reverence, and godly Fear.

Thus he was to Nadab and Abihu the Sons of Aaron, in the proper literal sense; they Lev. 10. 1, 2 presuming to offer Incense with common Fire, a Fire went out from the Lord and devoured them. Should God be so severe to all those, who offer up their Prayers to him with common Affections, and put no difference between their Deportment in his House, and in any Civil Court, how many that come to the Church, would never go from it again, but would (as Ananias and Sapphira were) be stricken dead upon the place.

'Tis true, God seldom in comparison shews himself so severe in this World, because this is the Day of Grace; the Day of Vengeance is deferred till the next. All that Wrath which Sinners by their hard and impenitent Hearts, do here treasure up unto themselves, he reserves it for them till that dreadful Day of Wrath, and of the Revelation of his righteous Judgment, *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming fire; taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* He will then be so consuming a Fire, that his very Presence will inflict everlasting Destruction upon all those, who either now chuse not to know him, that they may without fear neglect him; or if they know him, refuse to acknowledge and glorifie him as God. But were this Destruction such as would put an end to their Being, it would be the less terrible; yea so far from being terrible to them in that dismal State of Misery, in which they will then be; that, might they have their Wish, they would beg no greater Favour of God, than to be reduc'd to nothing: But alas! they shall be destroy'd, not simply as to Being, but as
to

to all such Being, as is not inexpressibly worse than no Being; Nothing will remain to them, but to be cast into Hell, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire will never be quenched,* Mark 9. 44. 46, 48. but *the smোক of their torments will ascend for ever and ever.* Rev. 14. 11. They will then be experimentally convinced, to their Eternal Sorrow, That *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;* Heb. 10. 31. of that God who lives for ever, and therefore will never cease to inflict vengeance upon them. However they may think to trifle with God now, they will then find, to their woe, That he will not be mock'd.

To what hath been said upon this Head, I shall add but one Consideration more, which is such as, one would think, should be of force, if not to affright, yet at least to shame *Christians*, out of all careless and negligent Behaviour in the House of God. And that is, That even *Turks* and *Heathens*, yea the very *Devils*, will rise in Judgment against irreverent *Christians*, and condemn them.

So devout are the *Turks*, that they suffer not themselves, so much as to look about them, but perform their Religious Offices with such Attention of Mind, that they think they should lose the fruit of their Prayers, if they should then but scratch their Head with their Finger; as an Eye-

witness

Busbeq. Epist. 3. witness informs us. For what, say they, if when a Man is to speak with the Bashaws, his whole Body is compos'd to Reverence; how much greater Reason is there, that the same Respect should be given to GOD, who so much exceeds all humane Height and Greatness. So intent, they think, they ought to be at their Prayers, as not to be diverted, though the Execution of the Sultan's Decree, should in the same moment be commanded, (as another Author tells us.)

Sir Paul Rycaut's Present State of the Ottoman Empire, lib. 2. chap. 23. Edit. 1.

For Heathens, it may suffice to say, That this was one of Pythagoras's Precepts, When thou comest into the Temple worship, and while thou art there do nothing else. And another of his Rules was, That no Man should go into a Temple when he is in a Journey. The meaning of which is, That God should not be worshipped by the bye, or when a Man is otherwise employed; but with the greatest Solemnity and Intention of Mind. Numa Pompilius decreed, That his Citizens should neither see, nor hear Divine Matters, in a careless manner, and with wandering Thoughts; but laying aside all distractions of Mind, should wholly apply their Meditations to Religion. And Plutarch tells us, That he took care, that in the Time of Divine

In the Life of Numa Pompilius.

vine

vine Worship, no noise should be heard in the Streets, which might obstruct or disturb the seriousness of Devotion: what shall I say more? Those who believe the Being of God, and yet do not Reverence him as God, the very Devils will rise up in Judgment against them: for though I do not say they worship God, yet 'tis certain they do not despise him, but dread the thoughts of his Power and Justice; for *the Devils believe and tremble.* Jam. 2. 19.

I proceed now in the

III. And last place, to suggest some further helps by way of direction, in order to the better performance of this Duty. I say further helps, because all the Arguments before-mention'd are so many helps towards it. And,

1. That we may the more devoutly worship God in his House, let us before we come thither lay aside our worldly Thoughts and Affections. Let no man (as St. Chrysostom speaks) enter In Vid. Dom. Hom. 1. the Church, having the cares of this World about him; no man with a wandering and distracted mind; but let him lay all these down without the doors, and so let him come. For coming thither (as he says in another place) In Cap. 1. Evang. Joh. Hom. 1. We come to Heaven, not in respect of the place indeed, but

of the temper and disposition of our minds ; for a Man while he lives on Earth , may ascend to Heaven , and take a view of the things that are there , &c. Let no Man therefore in the Church think of his domestic affairs ; but on the contrary while he is yet at home , let him begin those things he is to do in the Church.

Unless we thus leave the cares of this Life behind us, we shall do nothing less, than that which we pretend is the only thing we come to do. For the bare presenting of our bodies before God, can by no means be interpreted a worshipping of him, if our carriage be such as plainly testifies, That our hearts are far from him. They therefore have little reason to reckon themselves in the number of his sincere Worshippers, whose thoughts in his House are so much set on the things of this World, that they cannot prevail with themselves to forbear talking of them, even while the Divine Oracles are reading ; which one would think should (if any thing) command their attention, as being the Voice of God without any Gloss, or Comment upon it of Man's Devising.

2. In order to the loosening of our thoughts from earthly things , and raising them up to the things above. Let us when we are going to his House,

The Lessons,
Epistle, and
Gospel.

House reflect upon such like Considerations, as those I have before proposed. Let us seriously consider the most adorable Majesty of that God we are going to worship; That he is of purer Eyes, than to behold Evil, and cannot look upon Iniquity; that he *will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain.* And when we are come into his House, let us especially remember, That his holy and jealous Eye is upon us, to observe not only the Deportment of our Bodies, but the most secret Motions and Inclinations of our Souls. Were our Minds thus possessed with a quick sense, that this Great, and Glorious, and Holy, and Almighty God, hath his Eyes constantly upon us, could we suffer our own Eyes to be always rowling, as if our only Business in coming to the Church, were to observe what Faces and Fashions do there present themselves?

3. Let us seriously consider, of what great moment, to our selves, every part of the Divine Worship is. What is it we ask of God in our Prayers? Is it so small a thing, that our Condition will not be much the better or the worse, whether it be granted or denied us? Oh no! It is nothing less than the Pardon of our Sins, and the Assistance of his Grace, to be delivered from his
D Wrath,

Wrath, and to be received into his Favour ; which if we obtain, we shall be inconceivably happy ; if we miss, we shall be for ever intolérably miserable. And can we be too serious, too intent, too earnest in begging such things as these ? What is the consequence of our Thanksgiving, when it is sincere and hearty ? Is it not the continuance of those Blessings which we have already received, and the procuring of those which we yet want ? Were we sure, that what we now have would abide with us for ever, and that we should never stand in need of more, we might then think our selves the less concerned, to return Thanks for what is pass'd : but alas ! it is not so with us ; whatsoever we have is God's, and he may recal it when he pleases : and nothing can more highly provoke him to deprive us of our present Enjoyments, than our Unthankfulness for them. *Because she*

Hof. 2. 8, 9.

knew not that I gave her her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold ; therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, &c. So God threatned unthankful Israel.

Is the Word of God read and preach'd of such little concernment to us, that it matters not much, whether we attend to it or not ? Is it not the Rule, according

according to which we shall be judged, at the great and dreadful Day? So St. Paul tells us, *God, saith he, shall judge the secrets of men according to my Gospel.* Rom. 2. 16. Yea, the Judge himself hath told us the same. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.* John 12. 48. All they to whom the Gospel is published, shall be judg'd by the Gospel; and as that either acquits or condemns them, so shall they receive their Sentence from the mouth of the Judge. And can we pay too awful Attention to that Book which contains those Rules of Righteousness, by which we shall be tried, and adjudged to a State of Weal or Woe for ever? Considering therefore that every part of the Divine Worship, is of such high Importance to our selves, we cannot surely be too attentive and reverent in the performance of it? If all that hath been hitherto said, should not be thought enough, to compose us to a devout Frame of Spirit; Let us consider,

4. The near approach of Death, and that after Death comes the Judgment. How soon this earthly Tabernacle may be dissolved we cannot tell; the present instant is all that we are sure of,

the remainder of our Time is wholly in God's hand, and who knows but he may contract it to the next moment? Do we not almost daily hear of some who are suddenly cut off? But the longest term to which our Hopes can extend, how short is it? For what are *Forty*, *Fifty*, or *Sixty* Years more? Will they not pass away as a Shadow? Be in truth as short as those have been which are already pass'd, which now they are pass'd, seem nothing to us? They who now make their Religion but a matter of Drollery, when grim Death shall stare them in the face, their *Thoughts*, as well as their *Countenances*, will then be changed. That *Noble Earl*, who in the times of his health treated God and Religion, with as much Contempt, as his profane Wit was able to invent; what awful Thoughts had he of the Divine Majesty, when Death presented it self to his view? How passionately did he then cry out to a Gentleman that came to visit him; *O remember, that You condemn God no more; he is an avenging God, and will visit You for Your Sins.*

But did Death put an end to our Being, it would then be no great matter, whether God were our Friend or our Enemy; but as sure as it is, that we must die, so certain is it, that we shall be brought

brought to Judgment. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer* Eccles. 11. 9.
ther in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. O the Tremblings and the Agonies they will then be seized with, who are now so merrily disposed, that they cannot prevail with themselves to be serious, when employed in the weightiest Business in the World! How ghastly and distractedly will they then look, who now sport themselves with all that is Sacred? The Buffoon will then be struck dumb with Horrour and Amazement, who now makes it his common Divertisement to ridicule Religion. Into what dismal Cries and Lamentations, will their Rantings and Revellings then be changed? O were there any place for Hope left, with what Sorrow would I now confess my Sins, which I formerly made a mock of! How earnestly would I implore the Mercy of God, for the Pardon of them! How importunately would I pray for the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, to give me a new Heart! How attentively would I listen to those Divine Lessons, I formerly despised! And how careful would I be to put them in practice! But Oh! it is now too late; the
 Door

Door is shut, and will never again be set open to me. No Cries nor Tears, no Sighs nor Groans will now avail; the Judge is inexorable, nothing remains, but that I suffer the Vengeance of that God, whose *Grace* and *Mercy* I formerly set at nought.

Did we set before our Eyes the Terrours of the Lord; could we carry it so to his Face, as to provoke his Wrath against us? No doubtless, had we a vigorous sense of these things upon our Hearts, how devout should we be in our Prayers? How attentive in hearing God's Word? How careful to remember, and put in practice what we hear? In a word, How should we then *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*? I shall add but one Help more, and that is,

5. Let us pray earnestly to God, to give us his Holy Spirit, to excite in us an awful sense of his Glorious Majesty, to inspire us with heavenly and devout Thoughts and Affections; to open our Hearts to attend to his Word; and to compose our Minds to a steady attendance to every part of Divine Worship. If we thus pray with our whole Heart, our Requests will certainly be granted. For so God hath promised. *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy*

Prov. 2, 3, 5.

thy voice for understanding, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Thou shalt then experimentally know, what it is to be truly Religious, and shalt find thy self tyed by the strongest Bonds imaginable most devoutly to worship the Almighty Creatour, Preserver and Governour of the World. • To whom be ascribed, &c.

FINIS.
